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# Frequently Asked Questions About Foster Parenting



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# Helpful Foster Parent Information

## Is Foster Parenting For You?

As a Resource Foster Parent you can make a difference in a child's life. Foster parenting is both rewarding and challenging. Every day, licensed foster parents open their hearts and homes to a child in need of hope, understanding, guidance and stability. Many of these children have been emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually wounded due to abuse and neglect. Becoming a Resource Foster parent may be one of the most important decisions you can make.

## What is Foster Care?

Foster Care is the temporary placement of children in a safe, nurturing family environment when their parents cannot care for them. Foster Care:

- Protects vulnerable children;
- Has a goal of safely returning children home;
- Offers alternative placements for children who cannot return home.
  - ~ Placement with relatives
  - ~ Legal guardianship
  - ~ Adoption
  - ~ Long term foster care

## Who are the children in Foster Care?

Everyday, children and youth need Child Protective Services and a welcoming, nurturing foster home. They may:

- Be newborn or up to 18 years old;
- Have special needs, i.e.: Mental or physical disabilities or emotional scarring from trauma;

Some may:

- Require additional educational support services.
- Need assistance preparing for adulthood
- Be part of a sibling set needing a home for all the children in the family unit.

## Who are Resource Foster Parents?

Today's Resource Foster Parents represent the face of our community. They can be:

- Single
- Married
- Stay-at-home parent
- Work outside the home (with appropriate child care)
- Home owner
- Renter

When you welcome a child into your home, expect change:

- Enriched family experiences;
- Expanded family structure;
- Each family member makes personal commitments;
- Be ready to answer personal questions about:
  - ~ Lifestyle
  - ~ Parenting skills
  - ~ Ability to learn new skills
  - ~ Willingness to meet the special needs of a child who is in a difficult situation.

## Can I choose which child comes into my home?

A Resource Foster Family must decide the ages and gender of a child for whom they are best prepared and comfortable to give care. Factors to consider may include:

- Compatibility with other family members in the home;
- Each child's special interests, i.e.: Sports, hobbies;
- Know personal limitations;
- Not overextending oneself;
- Foster Parents' scope of ability or training.

Foster parents always make the final choice of which child or children they will bring into their home.

## How long will the child be in my home?

Each case is unique, but foster care is designed to be temporary, until a child can safely return to his/her family. How long a child lives with a foster family depends on the time needed to secure a permanent home. Children most often leave a foster home for more permanent placements, including:

- Reunification with birth family;
- Living with relatives;
- Adoption;
- Becoming legally independent.

## Can I adopt the foster child in my home?

Each child's goal is to reunify with his/her family. Sometimes a child cannot return home or live with other relatives. If so, their current foster parents can apply to be adoptive parents.

## What qualities do foster parents need?

Resource Foster Parents come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. They must be willing to:

- Participate in activities to assist in developing a child's social and physical skills;
- Willingly accept a foster child as a part of their family;
- Meet academic and social needs of each child;
- Honor foster child's religious belief and worship;
- Transport children to medical and counseling appointments, family visits, and school activities;
- Successfully foster parent as a team effort to help the foster child have a safe, permanent home. Team members may include:
  - ~ Foster child;
  - ~ Child's birth family;
  - ~ Agency staff;
  - ~ Other professionals.

# Resource Family Support

A support team of Human Services staff are available to answer questions and provide resource support, including:

- Child's Placement Social Worker;
- Licensing Social Worker;
- Foster Parent Coordinator;
- Resource Family Trainer\*;
- Foster Parent Ombudsman can discuss concerns and issues not resolved by the assigned Human Services staff.

\* Ongoing training and personal development resources are available for continuing education.

## Who can help ensure placement stability?

Placement stability is important for children in foster care. These children experience an upset when removed from their families. They need a consistent place to call home where they can learn healthy behaviors. If a placement becomes questionable, a Team Decisionmaking Meeting (TDM) can assist. Goals of the TDM include:

- Meet as soon as possible, before placement change\*;
- Discuss placement concerns;
- Identify services to assist Resource Foster Family;
- Identify services to assist foster child;
- Identify resources to support placement;
- Ensure placement stability.

\* Communicate concerns to your Social Worker and request a TDM before any placement decision is made.

## What about Social Worker and Family Visits?

While a child is placed in a foster home, his/her Social Worker must visit regularly to assess progress and answer the Resource Foster Parents' questions. Most often, regular contact between birth family and the foster child is necessary for successful family reunification. If behavioral or emotional issues develop, the Social Worker can assist by offering strategies and support. Family Counseling and Family Decision Meetings are available for the child and both their birth and foster families to assist Resource Foster Families in meeting the challenges of successful parenting.

## Financial Assistance

### What type of financial assistance do Resource Families receive?

Resource families are expected to have a regular source of income to meet their own family's financial needs without the support of foster care money. Supplemental monthly foster care payments are provided to assist with a foster child's:

- Food
- Shelter
- Clothing
- Recreation
- Incidentals

Additional funding may be available for:

- Clothing allowance – 6 weeks after child enters foster care.
- Medi-Cal card – for medical/dental expenses;
- Supportive funding for special needs child.

# Licensing Requirements

Much dedication is required to become a successful Resource Foster Parent. Before a Foster Family Home License can be issued, the potential foster parent(s) must complete an application. The Department of Human Services reviews the information provided to ensure a family meets regulatory requirements for receiving a license.

## What are the licensing regulations?

To be considered for becoming a Resource Foster Parent all the following requirements must be met:

- Attend orientation
- Complete licensing application
- Receive first aid and CPR certification
- Submit to fingerprinting
- Pass a background screening (some crimes may be exemptible)
- Attend pre-placement training (27 hours)
- Meet financial requirements (own source of income)
- Meet health requirements (good health, Tuberculosis test)

According to regulations, the following minimum housekeeping standards are required for licensure:

- Each foster child must have enough bedroom space, including his/her own bed and storage area. Most often, a foster child can share a room with a same sex child.
- All open bodies of water must be surrounded by a fence or have a safety cover, particularly for placement of children under 10 years old and those with disabilities.
- All medications, cleaning solutions, poisons, and firearms must be kept in a locked area.
- All sleeping areas must have working smoke detector(s) and first-aid supplies.

## What changes do I report to my Licensing worker?

All household changes, including new family members and an address change, must be immediately reported to the Licensing worker. Some of the most common household changes are:

- Anyone over age 18 moves into your home – all adults over age 18 must pass a background check;
- You move – a new license and inspection are required;
- You make any major structural changes to your home;
- You are arrested or receive a citation for more than a simple traffic violation.

Failure to report these changes will result in forfeiting the foster care license.

## Where can I get more information?

For more information on becoming a Resource Foster Parent, please call (661) 631-6204.



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